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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Highway Safety Officials Turn up the**  
**HEAT on Impaired Drivers for 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend**  
***2007 Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign launches with 7 sobriety checkpoints***

**Dover** – If your plans for the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday weekend include going out and drinking alcohol, consider this your warning. Seven DUI checkpoints are scheduled to be held in locations across the state this weekend as the Delaware Office of Highway Safety and law enforcement officials move into phase two of their “120 Days of Summer HEAT” initiative with the launch of the 2007 *Checkpoint Strikeforce* impaired driving prevention campaign.

*Checkpoint Strikeforce* is a regional sobriety checkpoint campaign aimed at arresting DUI offenders, and using a high visibility enforcement presence to deter those who would otherwise choose to drink and drive. The campaign, now in its sixth year, involves setting up weekly DUI checkpoints statewide.

“Starting this weekend we’re turning up the HEAT on alcohol and drug impaired drivers,” said Tricia Roberts, Director of the Office of Highway Safety. “But our dedicated law enforcement community won’t stop when the holiday weekend ends, they’ll continue to conduct multiple DUI checkpoints every week in an effort to protect all motorists from those who choose to commit this violent and far too often deadly crime.”

Approximately 140 sobriety checkpoints are scheduled to occur over the next six months ending with five on New Year’s Eve. Thirty-one police agencies are participating in this year’s campaign. During the 2006 campaign officers arrested 618 people in six months for DUI.

The 2007 *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign will feature two new elements. OHS will implement a Sobriety Checkpoint Dedication program beginning in mid-July. The program involves dedicating a DUI checkpoint to the memory of an individual killed in an alcohol-related crash. The

intention is to honor and pay tribute to victims, educate the community and provide support for family members and friends of impaired driving victim.

The second new component of this year's campaign will focus on increasing the use of designated drivers in Delaware by partnering with the HERO Campaign for Designated Drivers. The HERO Campaign was founded by the family of the late Ensign John Elliott, who was killed in a tragic accident involving a DUI suspect in 2000. Campaign efforts include lobbying for tougher penalties for DUI offenders, working with tavern owners to promote designated driving by providing free non-alcoholic drinks for designated drivers, and spreading awareness of the dangers of drunken driving.

In 2006 alcohol-related deaths declined by nearly 8% from the previous year. Still 55 people (or 37% of all killed in Delaware car crashes) died in an impaired driving crash. Since January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, 20 people (or 34%) have been killed in DUI-related crashes compared to 29 (or 42%) at this time last year.

All motorists are urged to play it safe this weekend. If you plan on going out and consuming alcohol plan ahead and designate a sober driver before you leave the house or condo. But if you find yourself out drinking when you didn't plan to use one of the following options: call a sober friend or family member to come get you; call a cab – ask your bartender for recommendations; at the beach, try DART'S Resort Transit Service – visit [www.dartfirststate.com](http://www.dartfirststate.com) for more information.

OHS Director Tricia Roberts had one more piece of advice.

“Remember, impaired driving is a violent crime that kills, there is no excuse for getting behind the wheel while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. And you've been warned. We're turning up the HEAT on impaired drivers because we're serious about safety.”

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